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NEW UNION ISSUE

'Found First A Smoking Room'

by WILFRED T. HASTINGS

"If I were founding a university, I would found first a smoking room; then when I had a little more money in hand I would found a dormitory; then after that, or more probably with it, a decent reading room and a library. After that, if I still had more money that I couldn't use, I would hire a professor and get some text books." — Stephen Leacock

Stephen Leacock of course, was overstating his case. Few of us would wish to take his advice literally. On the other hand the point he makes is one to which most of us would assent. It is that a large part of a university education consists of the meeting of mind with mind in informal out-of-class discussion. A cynic once described a university lecture as a convenient means of transferring information from the note book of the professor to that of the student without it passing through the mind of either. Those who regard education as merely (or even mainly) a process of transmitting information should read no further. This article is not for them; its premise is that education has to do with the development of the whole man, with the training of the mind, with the growth of character and personality.

At the heart of all education is human encounter. This is where the smoking room comes in. Whilst most university lectures are certainly not patterned after tht description quoted above, it must surely be granted that there are other dimensions to human encounter than those experienced in the class room. It is these other dimensions which can and should be provided by a good students' union or university centre. It is here that we should look for our smoking room.

The union must provide a place in which the spirit of the student body, and indeed of the whole university community, can find expression. It must surround its members with the facilities and amenities of the good life. The development of the whole man requires that we should have a place in which the artistic sensibilities of students can be developed. ..The .provision ..of ..display space for pictures and sculpture, of facilities for listening to music, both live and recorded and of theatre workshops is essential if we are to fill the gaps which necessarily exist in a purely academic university education. It is not without significance that it is Hart House at the University of Toronto which has one of the finest collections of Canadian art in existence, and that the Hart House Orchestra was sent to represent Canada at the Brussels Exhibition.

One occasionally detects a tendency at McGill to discount the student and his activities. It is our contention that McGill has one of the finest and most responsible student organizations in North America. It is a credit to the university authorities that a considerable degree of freedom to govern their own affairs has been allowed to the student body. This system of self-government is providing the opportunities in which students mature and gain experience. The union is the centre of that system of self-government and a new union would have to provide administrative facilities for it.

The growth of our university and the increasing specialisation of the academic disciplines makes more and more apparent the need for an integrating factor in the life of the universiity. A new union must in a very real sense be a centre for the common life of the university. It should be a place where the divisions which necessarily exist at other levels of university life, between faculties, between graduate student and undergraduate student, between resident and non-resident can be effectively bridged. It should provide facilities for informal encounter between students and professors in surroundings in which both can feel at ease.

For it to be effective as this kind of centre great attention must be paid to the siting of the new building in such a place that it may be of service to all members of the university community. Its facilities must be easy of access; a location on the fringe of the university area would be a denial of its function as a centre and a barrier to its effectiveness.

The building which is needed probably cannot be built for less than two and a half million dollars and is more likely to require three millions. The spending of this amount of money certainly demands that the building be planned with great care so that it may be suitable for the purposes for which it is intended, and that it may be adaptable to the changing needs of the future. Great attention should be given in its design to the way in which architecture affects institutions and individuals. The building should express the character of McGill University for it will set the tone of student life for many years. As well as providing the basic service and administrative facilities for student organizations it should have something of the atmosphere of a good, cultured, civilised home. For many students it will be precisely that — a home away from home.

The proposals of the Senate Committee on Development which were published last week, if carried out, are very unlikely to produce a centre of real worth. ..The ..Committee ..proposes ..the construction of a tower at the rear of the present Students' Union and the rehabilitation of the present building with the intention that the two together should form a new "university centre". The proposed site would be far from the actual centre of gravity of the developing campus and would be separated from it by a major traffic artery. These in themselves are two strong reasons for not building on the present site.

Apart from these reasons it must also be borne in mind that a tower of 12 stories is highly unlikely to contribute to the integrating of the student body, nor to provide those facilities for human encounter which we believe to be desirable. It is more likely to add its own kind of departmentalisation to the life of the university.

The floor space required has been calculated at approximately 80,000 square feet, but 80,000 square feet provided in lots of a few thousand square feet placed one above the other is not the same thing as 80,000 square feet arranged to meet some if not all of the requirements mentioned in this article. There are other types of university building which could be developed vertically without detracting from the utility of the services provided in them. The university centre is not, in our opinion, such a building.

Granted the need for a new union, its location and design are as important to the university as that of any other building on the campus. The activities conducted in a good Students' Union should be regarded as an essential part of the education of the student. The union is not merely a recreation centre in which students relax between bouts of education. Either the union must be viewed as an integral part of the education process or it should be banished from university life altogether. If it does not contribute in some real measure to the education of those who use it, it has no place on the campus and the job should be left to off-campus social clubs, youth groups, the Y.M.C.A. and similar bodies.

The words spoken by Mr. Vincent Massey on the occasion of the opening of Hart House are as true for McGill today as they were for the University of Toronto in 1919:

"The truest education requires that the discipline of the class room should be generously supplemented by the enjoyment, in the fullest measure, of a common life... it is greatly to be hoped that this place will exercise an influence of the most positive nature in giving the student a real sense of membership in an academic family and making him conscious of a very noble tradition which it is his duty and privilege to maintain... Here will be a place where the present and the past generations will meet and here, let us hope, may be fostered the lasting loyalty and the "esprit de corps" which are essential to the welfare of any seat of learning."

Can we ask more? Should we be satisfied with less?



Message From The President

Once again the problem of the situation, design and construction of a New Union faces the student body. This time it takes the form of a University press release to the effect that our long hoped-for "New Union" will be located on the old site, and that it will be no more than a renovation and addition to the old building. On top of this, press release announces that the new complex will be subject to University control.

In my opinion the University plan is one which will be very damaging not only to the Students' Society as such, but, in the long run, to every individual on the McGill campus. A New Union, properly designed and properly situated, can fulfill a fundamental necessity in every student's education at the University. A Students Centre should, by virtue of its site and plan, increase the student's interests, widen his intellectual horizons, better his knowledge of human relations, increase his capacity for work and provide valuable recreational outlets.

Without proper design and without proper location a New Union will be no better than the old building now in use. The Sherbrooke Street site, cut off from the rest of the existing campus by one of Montreal's most heavily travelled routes, and located in a position remote from the proposed sites for University expansion, is most undesirable. A tower-like structure, which must result from building on the old site, will tend to isolate activities floor by floor, will create tremendous circulation difficulties, reducing interest in student activities.

Another and even more profund problem which suddenly confronts us as a result of the University announcement is that of infringement upon student autonomy. Under the restrictive policies recently adopted by the Senate and the Board of Governors, the responsibility of the Students' Society, as well as its activities will be stifled.

For thirty-two years the New Union Committee has taken on itself the responsibility of representing the McGill student body in negotiations for a New Union. In the interests of diplomacy and to retain satisfactory relationship with the various committees with which it has had to deal, the New Union Committee has not presented a report to the student body for a long period of time. Tomorrow noon there will be an open meeting of the Students' Society. At this time the Chairman of the present New Union Committee will address the McGill student body. At this time McGill students will be given an opportunity to voice their opinion on the efforts of their representatives and to formulate a collective decision on the present New Union situation. We must convince the Governors and the Senate of this University that we are a unified and mature student body.

In the interest of the Students' Society as a whole and every present or future student in particular, I urge you all very strongly to attend your open meeting tomorrow in the Ballroom.

ROBERT S. CARSWELL
President, Students' Society

Report To The New Union Committee

Unparalleled History

This year marks the thirty-second anniversary of the New Union Committee.

As you adopt your posts in the service of the Students' Society and of the University I think it is important that you know something of the unparalleled history of this Committee. It is of particular interest now since you will hear several University officials suggest that the major obstacle to the construction of a New Union is student uncertainty and vascillation. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

The present Student Union, built in 1907 as a "Gentleman's Club" for 600 students was soon called upon to serve as the centre of increasing student activity for 3000. Hence, in 1927, people associated with McGill began to consider the prospects for an extension to the Union or for a new building. Eventually a Committee was set up with a different chairman each year. Year after year the committee would submit a request to the University and, each time, they were told that a Union would soon be built. However, if the committee made a suggestion as to the financing of the building, e.g. a fund drive, bond issue, bank loan, etc., then they were told that one must have a site before seeking money.

YEARS OF NOTHING

If, on the other hand, they recommended a site, they were told that no decision could be made as to allocation of a site if there was no money in view. This chain of argument occupied the one year in office of each committee and then the whole thing started over again with new committees proposing different sites and different financial schemes.

This procedure continued and in 1952 the Students' Society set up an endowment fund to show the interest of the students; this fund for New Union construction now contains over $50,000. A brief presented in 1953 to the University was received with good response and, in 1954, John Stubbs was assured that the "University feels that a New Union is now of top priority and plans are being considered for the raising of the necessary funds".

In 1955 the Students' Society sent to the Board of Governors a carefully prepared brief, along with a cheque of $25,000, pointing out that the present Union denied even "a minimum daily participation in the university community" to a majority of McGill's students. The Board of Governors had set up a New Union Committee under Mr. J. A. Fuller in 1953 and this committee then decided to look into the space requirements of a New Union. These requirements were agreed upon and, at the end of 1955, Av Cohen, the Students' Society president, was told that the New Union now had "TOP priority".

"TOP PRIORITY"

After being assured of the "top priority" of the Union, with the student body now 7000 and the old Union literally falling apart, Av Cohen was shocked to find that in the McGill Fund Drive of 1956, the Union was **not even mentioned** as one of the projects to be built. He was

This report was prepared by **STUART SMITH**, chairman of the New Union Committee. Because of its importance at this time we are presenting it in the form of an open letter to McGill students.

even more surprised to learn that the Union was not on the agenda of the meeting which decided this matter. A letter of protest was sent from the Students' Society, to no avail.

Continual reassurances were given subsequent New Union Committee chairmen, but no action was taken. In 1958 I was appointed to head the Committee and was told by the Principal that Mr. Fuller's committee was being reconstituted and that architects had been hired to look into the possibility of constructing a "first stage" of a Union on McTavish Street, near Sherbrooke. My reaction was that the proposed site was too small and that the building could not be done in stages since, to split the eating facilities away from the student activities would tend to destroy the latter. The Principal said that Mr. Fuller's committee would have to decide all this. Mr. Fuller's committee met for about a year and concluded that the McTavish Street site was too small for a full Union and that the building should not be built in stages.

CHANGE OF PLANS

The University then allocated the southeast corner of University and Milton Streets for a New Union. Planning was started and certain architectural problems ensued. The Students' Society New Union committee worked continuously during the summer of 1960 at great expense of time, effort and money to prepare a suitable plan with the architects. This plan was completed in August. Just at that time, however, I was shown a copy of the publication, "The Presbyterian Record", which noted that McGill was giving the University and Milton Street site to the Presbyterian Church in exchange for the present Presbyterian College site; and that, indeed, this deal had been under consideration for a long time. When I protested the situation whereby we were working on plans for a specific area while that very property was being offered for exchange, the Principal indicated his surprise that I should have heard of the deal, but assured me that everything was really in the best interests of the students since, for many years, everyone had agreed that the best site for a Union was the Presbyterian College one. He said he was delighted to assure me that the Presbyterian College site was earmarked for a new Union and that he was pleased since this was really the long-sought and ideal arrangement.

During the Summer of 1961, however, a Senate committee of professors, without once interviewing a student or anyone interested in New College Unions, decided that the Presbyterian College site was not suitable for a Union, and that, indeed, the only solution was to build a 12-storey annex to the present Union on the parking lot in the rear. The opinion of the Principal on this suggestion has not as yet been communicated to us; but the Montreal Star carried an article stating that such a plan had been approved by the Board of Governors.

WE ARE ACTIVE

Ladies and gentlemen of the New Union Committee of the Students' Society: Those are the facts. If there are people who have been guilty of uncertainty and vascillation, it has not been the students. Your first reaction when presented with these facts will be to scream in outrage and protest — this we should not do. We must remember that our cause, a just and important one for this great University, has many friends, especially among the Graduates Society and among certain members of the Board of Governors, particularly Mr. J. A. Fuller and his associates. We must continue to adopt the constructive and positive attitudes that marked our predecessors in office; we must continue to negotiate quietly with the University authorities and to exercise maturity in our decisions. Committee members, let us do our job with full resolve: our beloved Alma Mater expects no less from us.

Student Lounge At McMaster



Photo by David Davey

Who Should Control The New Union?

McGill's Development Programme referred to a University Centre *"Under the control of the University"*. The phrase was underlined in the report that was given to the press, and the Development Programme was approved by the Board of Governors before being made public.

RETROGRESSION

It would be a ridiculous understatement to say that this is a significant step backwards for McGill. The autonomy of McGill students and her Students' Union is well known and is praised by students from other North American universities. Everything might seem a little more secure and safe from the Governors' point of view if they had someone in their employ to run the Union. But it was not a safe, conservative, attitude that made McGill or any other institution great, and it could be this creeping conservatism that will reduce McGill to mediocrity.

The office of the President of the Students' Union has existed since this Union was built, and to take authority from that office would be to take authority from the student body unnecessarily. A student leader running the Union ensures that the Union's programme is flexible and adaptable to a changing campus..

A permanent University official would be full of new ideas

by

WILLIAM G. HUTCHISON

President, McGill Students' Union

for his first two or three years but would become less acceptable to changes in his later years. The idea of having a student in control gives the other students a greater sense of participation than if they had to continually make appointments to see an older director. In effect, a student leader is much easier to approach than a permanent official.

The office of the Union President provides tremendous experience and responsibility for those holding the office. This only concerns one student per year, but it is too valuable an opportunity to remove without just cause. Dining facilities are now operated by a professional caterer chosen by the Students' Executive Council.

Regardless of whether five hundred or two thousands peoeration of the kitchen could ple are served per day, the opbe overseen as effectively by students as by faculty. Our cafeteria is in good shape this year, complaints are minimal, and we have recently been complimented by the city health department on the cleanliness of the kitchen. Where then is the reason for removing student control?

TRUST

McGill's Administration argues that if they build a two and one half million dollar building they want direct control over its use. While our Union does not approach this value now, its relative value fifty years ago was considerable. Students were entrusted with its administration then and have done a good work.

This same trust should be forthcoming now and if it isn't it would be advisable for the student body to do their own compaigning for funds, employ their own architects and merely ask the university for a *reasonable* piece of land. This has been done at a few other universities with notable success.

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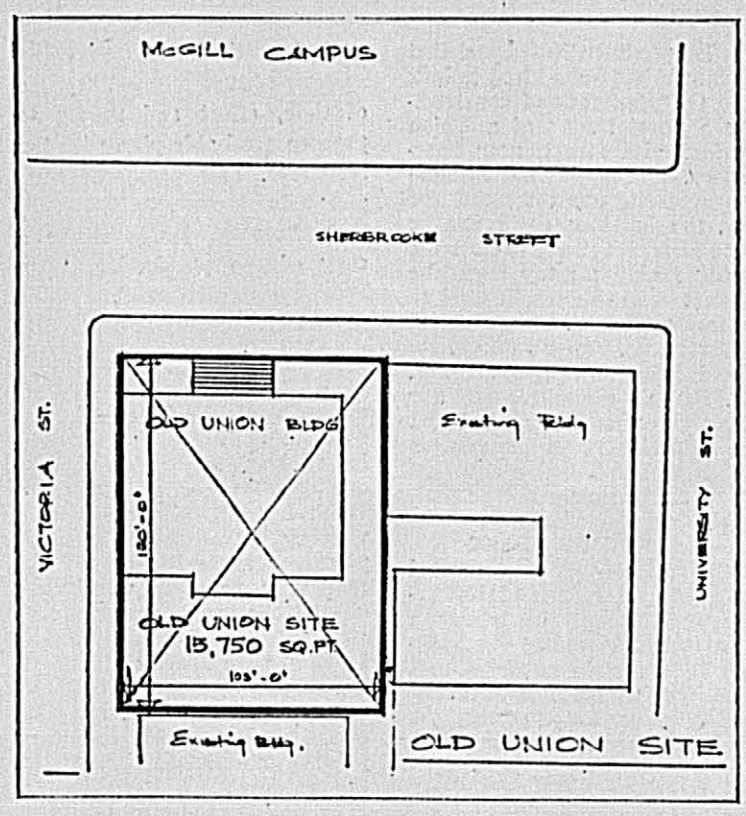
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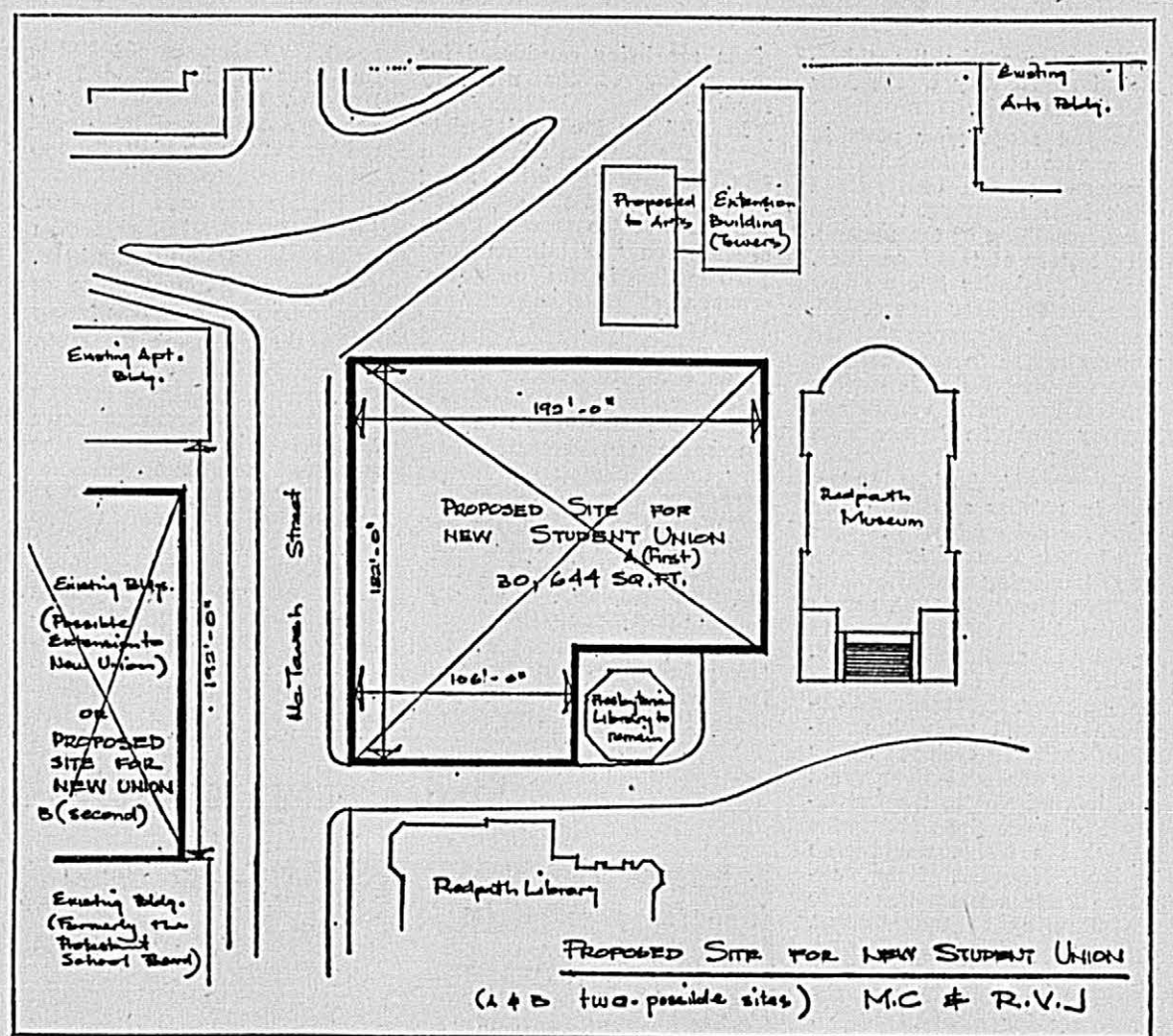
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NOVEMBER 1, 1961

A Question Of Site





The architectural development of this campus since after the War has not taken place in an unorganized manner. Individually the majority of new buildings and extensions in this period are uninteresting and characterless in appearance, and even more disturbing in their relationship to one another and to the early buildings. A minimum consideration has been given to the inspirational aspect of architecture and to the continuation of standards set by our predecessors.

The suggestion of rebuilding the student Union on the existing site brings back into focus McGill's lack of a master plan. Who presently is doing the campus planning at McGill?

Within the last year, planners have been asked to do portions of the campus and recently the development of one of these portions — that of the new Union — was announced. It must be pointed out that the development of portions of the campus plan cannot substitute for a master plan.

CENTRAL LOCATION

By its very nature, let alone its name, the new "University Centre" should be almost centrally located within easy access to the majority of students. The Sherbrooke Street site is off campus within a commercial rather than a campus environment and across a major traffic artery.

It is naive to think that Sherbrooke Street can once again have an important relationship to the campus just as it is naive to think that the Roddick Gates can once again regain the prominence and significance they once enjoyed. Buildings on Sherbrooke Street have repeatedly ignored the presence of the campus and to add insult to injury, a parking lot lot is located almost directly opposite the Gates. A University Centre located on Sherbrooke Street would therefore be isolated from the rest of the campus.

Not only is the present site badly located by virtue of its separation from the campus but also one of the most important features of a student centre — that of a back-up space — is lacking and will undoubtedly be lacking in a new building located on the old site, because of space limitations.

Any student who experienced the near riot in front of the Union after the Toronto football game should realize the necessity of a "back-up space" or a "milling about area" in relation to a student centre.

The importance of having an easily accessible building within a short distance of the centre of the campus is yet another vital consideration. Brief lunch hour periods are used to eat lunch and attend meetings. The very success of a student union as measured by the degree of activity and participation is therefore dependent on accessibility of the building and hence its proper location.

by
MORRIS CHARNEY,
DEREK DRUMMOND,
and
RUDY V. JAVOSKY

For the Union to become a natural gathering place it must have an environment conductive to attracting students. Presently on campus we have several such gathering points to which students are attached. These include the Arts Building Steps, the terrace in front of Redpath Library, the smoking room in the Library, and perhaps the common rooms in the Engineering and Arst Buildings.

COMMON FACTOR

Although these places are all very different in character, they have one common factor — with the exception of the common rooms they are located near the centre of gravity of the student population. The present Union is not a natural gathering place and never will be in its present location. Good architecture will not necessarily provide these gathering points; correct location will.

It would seem that the most logical site for a new Union is the Presbyterian College site. If we include the circular reading room of the college and the intended Arts Building extension, then the proposed site is still aprroximately twice the size of the old Union site. This location would have the advantage of being close to the Redpath Library and to the centre of campus activity.

Most important of all, future plans envisage the University to expand in a westerly direction. The Union would then be located at the transition point between the old campus and the new western extensions. Owing to the problems of vertical circulation in a heavily used building, one can appreciate the architectural possibilities of a larger site.

Why are the University authorities unwilling to use this site for a student union? Surely it is not because of cost considerations—since the commercially zoned land of the old Union site is worth at least five times as much as the Presbyterian college site.

An alternative proposal would be the west side of McTavish Street, which has many of the advantages of the Presbyterian College site.

PRESERVE BUILDING

On the exterior the present Union is one of the finest buildings remaining on the fast deteriorating Sherbrooke Street. It is a building whose present function as a student centre is beyond any doubt totally inadequate. Yet buildings as well built as the Union, and having a history and tradition of their own, deserve to remain standing because of the ease with which they could be rehabilitated to serve other functions.

It is not difficult, for example, to envisage the old Union as a much needed local Art Gallery for the exhibition and collection of Canadian works of art. Its value to the city and to the University in terms of future generations would then be immeasurable. The McCord Museum, which undoubtedly will be demolished with proposed extensions to the Medical and Law Buildings, could readily be accomodated in the old Union. The scope of the Museum facilities could then be expanded to directly benefit both the McGill students and the general public.

STUDENTS' SOCIETY MEETING

A meetings of the Students' Society of McGill University will be held in the Ballroom of the McGill Students' Union tomorrow at 1 pm.

The meeting will hear and consider the first public report of the New Union Committee on decisions taken on the building and location of a new union.

ROBERT S. CARSWELL,
President,
Students' Society of
McGill University